

Everything you could by Jancys-Blue-Bayou

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Summary: She tries to come up with a plan. Number one is protecting Will. Looking up at the menacing figure towering over her she wishes she had the gun they stole from him a year ago. Or at least a bat or something. Jonathan and Joyce will be here soon. She needs backup. But calling for it when he's standing right in front of her is impossible. Quickly she formulates a plan.

Everything you could

"Jump! Jump! No, go that way! No the other way!"

"Ahhh!"

"Watch out!"

"Damnit!"

"I win."

They quiet down, resigning themselves to Will's statement. The little figure on the TV screen is no more, showing their fate in Crystal Castles. She looks to Jonathan.

"I told you to not go that way."

"You were stressing me out!" He defends himself.

"You're usually good under pressure!"

"Not even as a team you guys can beat me," Will contently giggles.

"We'll see about that, let's switch roles, give me," she beckons for the joystick from Jonathan who hands it over. "This ain't over yet," she adds and playfully glares at Will sitting on the floor next to her.

"Suit yourself," Will shrugs and chuckles, restarting the game.

So far the impromptu Atari tournament they started this afternoon on her insistence has been a blow-out for Will. A sane person might think over why she's so competitive that she's determined to keep playing until she schools this 13 year old boy at one game at least. But she's not quite ready for that yet.

The phone rings and Jonathan gets up to answer while she and Will start playing again. She's never been much for video games, but they're fun to play with Will. She never played them much with Mike before, he never wanted to play them with her. Probably because she'd always kick his ass at board games. She and Mike have started

to spend some more time with each other now than they have in recent years, but it's probably for the best to not play games with him, they used to but it usually ended with a fight because they're both competitive. And would gloat against the other. Neither Will nor Jonathan is like that, which is good. And way healthier.

Jonathan comes back into the room.

"So that was mom, car won't start so I gotta pick her up from work," he informs them.

"Mmmhmm," is her only answer as she's trying to focus on not losing a life in the game.

"Okay," Will says, watching her progress on screen, waiting for his turn.

"So I'll be right back," Jonathan continues.

"Uh-huh..." she mumbles in answer. Focus Wheeler, focus.

"Bye," Jonathan continues and plants a kiss to the top of her head.

"Damnit!" She calls out. Normally she loves it when he does that but now it cost her a virtual life. "You made me lose focus!"

Will snickers.

"Sorry," Jonathan smirks, on his way out the door.

"You're not really sorry," she accuses.

"You're usually not so easily-distracted," he defends himself. "See you later."

"Hey that was your best run yet!" Will compliments when she finally is bested on level seven.

"Game on then, William," she smirks.

"But I can probably still take you," Will adds with a grin. She's found

that sassiness seems to run in the Byers family.

Before Will can start his turn a banging on the door interrupts them. Weird. They're not expecting anyone but Jonathan and he has keys of course. Will gets up to answer it.

"Hey there, son."

Will visibly recoils, taking half a step back and seemingly shrinking a little when he sees the man on the threshold. She immediately gets up. Because that man should not be here. He should go to hell. She's never really interacted with Lonnie Byers. She saw him at Will's "funeral" last year but didn't speak to him. She sometimes saw him when she was younger and would go to the Byers house to pick up Mike but most often he wasn't there. But she knows. Because Jonathan's told her. Good God, the things he's told her. All the abuse. Everything he endured. Everything he took. Everything he went out of his way to take so that Will wouldn't have to.

Anyone crosses the Byers, monster or man, they cross her. Lonnie has retroactively made her list. The very top of her list. She wishes she could go back in time and stop it all. But she can't. She can however, stop anything more from happening. Or at least do all she can to stop it. She walks over, places a hand on Will's shoulder and moves him backward, placing herself in front of him.

"Go away," she tells the man leaning with a hand against the door frame. He reeks of stale old cigarettes, beer and whiskey.

"And who the hell are you?" Lonnie scoffs, looking her up and down. His gaze lingers over her chest. Creep. She crosses her arms.

"Doesn't matter, you've got no business here. Get out."

"Who the fuck are you to tell me to get out of my own house?" Lonnie sighs.

"It's not your house."

"Funny, I paid for it. It's my house."

"It's Joyce's house."

Another sigh. Lonnie tries to look past her.

"Will, who the fuck is this? Do you really still need a babysitter?"

"She's not a babysitter, she's Jonathan's-" Will starts protesting but cuts himself off, maybe realizing that Lonnie doesn't need to know anything at all.

"You're with Jonathan?" Lonnie almost chuckles in a mockingly gleeful tone. "How the hell did that charity case manage to swing a girl like you- ohh..." he cuts himself off as a look of realization and recognition dawns on his face. "Now I see, you're the Wheeler's girl! Damn you've grown up nicely. You looked damn fine at the funeral."

She tries not to shudder at the fact that Lonnie is at the level of creep where he checks out a 16 year old girl at his youngest son's funeral. She just has to stand her ground, has to get him out of here.

"Go away," she tries again.

"No. See I have a little situation on my hands and I need some cash, and since this is my house, I've come to get some that's rightfully mine. Now we can either do this the easy way or the hard way girl. So how about you and the little fag move aside and let me get what I came for and I'll be out of this dump," Lonnie lays out in a steely voice while somehow making himself seem even bigger as he towers in the door frame.

Shit. Well she's not having him ransack the goddamn house. But he's getting more and more threatening. She tries to come up with a plan. Number one is protecting Will. Looking up at the menacing figure towering over her she wishes she had the gun they stole from him a year ago. Or at least a bat or something. Jonathan and Joyce will be here soon. She needs backup. But calling for it when he's standing right in front of her is impossible. Quickly she formulates a plan. To bluff and buy just a little bit of time, it may be enough.

"Hey, Chief's here," she says, fixing her gaze to a point behind Lonnie and nodding. Lonnie abruptly turns around to look. Quickly she slams the door shut.

"Call Hopper, then go out the back!" She calls to Will while she holds the door shut and tries to lock it. But the damn key jams. Will frantically runs to the phone.

"Fucking bitch!" Lonnie swears on the outside. He begins to try to force the door open. The fucking key. She tries to press it shut again but she knows it's a needless attempt, he is much bigger and stronger than her. She holds on a little longer, got to have time to warn Will at least.

"Will! Run, now!" She calls out. She hears him drop the receiver as it bangs against the wall and his face filled with fear appears in the doorway. "Now!" She calls out again. Will turns and runs towards the backdoor. She releases the door and heads in the same direction.

"Hard way it is!" She hears Lonnie's booming voice behind her as the door smashes open.

And fuck, he's quicker than she thought. She's just on the verge of making it into the hallway when two large hands catches up with her from behind and sends her flying into the door frame instead with such speed she drops to the floor, wind knocked out of her.

"You could've made this easier for you. But now I'm angry," Lonnie growls in her face, gripping her by the collar and pulling her up face to face with him as he bends down over her, menacingly.

"Fuck you," she groans out when she's regained some air in her lungs.

The hit takes her by surprise. He strikes her across her face with the back of his hand. It dazes her momentarily. She can taste blood, she split her lip. Her ears are ringing.

"I'm gonna-"

She kicks him, hard as she can, in the groin. He doubles over in pain and she can break free. She runs to the kitchen where the backdoor is. She hears him get up and go after her. He's right after her. Will is in the kitchen. She really hoped he was gone. But there he stands, holding the flower vase that was previously on the table. Instinctively she ducks to the side. She can hear it shatter and Lonnie crying out in

pain.

But it doesn't stop him. Instead he now turns on Will, who backs into the table. Hell no. Before Lonnie can get to Will she throws herself at him and hits him in the head. An act of desperation. She doesn't know what to do except that she won't let him touch Will. She hoped to catch him by surprise at least, but with ease he pushes her up against the counter. She instinctively feels around the countertop for anything to use as a weapon, but he pins her arms and then knees her in the ribs, knocking the wind out of her again. She sinks to the floor. She can't breathe. Lonnie's towering over her again. She can hear Will screaming and scrambling.

Things happen quickly. Lonnie grabs her. But suddenly someone grabs Lonnie and pulls him away. Jonathan. Through her tears she sees him land a punch right on Lonnie's jaw. Lonnie stumbles back. Jonathan quickly connects with a series of punches right in his face, knocking Lonnie to the ground. She can barely breathe, but she can see Jonathan on top of Lonnie, landing punch after punch in his face with ferocity. She's vaguely aware of Joyce's presence in the room, next to Will. More movement in the corner of her eye. Another person rushes into the room. Hopper. He pushes Jonathan away from Lonnie.

"Go to her," he commands and points right at her while he takes Jonathan's place, flipping Lonnie around and cuffing his hands behind his back.

In a flash Jonathan is with her. Crouching down in front of her he looks at her with a combination of fear and concern she's never really seen from him before, all at once like that. He gently puts his hands on her shoulders. She relishes his touch. Feeling his hands on her after feeling Lonnie's is everything. His gaze softens even more as he seeks eye contact with her. She still can barely breathe and he of course notices.

"Breathe with me," he whispers, leaning in close with his face right by hers. He takes long, steady breaths and she tries to match it. Slowly, she gets control of her breathing again.

"Are you okay?" He whispers then.

She buries her face in his chest. He immediately wraps his arms around her, holding her close. She tunes everything else out but him. She wants to stay there forever. It's safe.

"Will okay?" She whispers.

"Will is fine, are you okay?" He whispers back.

"Yes just hold me, please," she gets out. Suddenly she feels very small. And things hurt. She guesses it's the adrenaline now wearing off. He instantly grants her request, holding her even closer. She blinks away more tears. Everything hurts. And fuck, that could've gone really bad. Shit. But at least Will is okay.

She's not sure for how long they stay like that. She can hear Hopper drag Lonnie away. Joyce and Will having a hushed conversation. But mostly she just focuses on Jonathan. His calming presence. His touch, his scent, the words of comfort he whispers to her. Telling her he loves her, that it's going to be okay, that she's strong and amazing. She could stay like that forever. But eventually something so mundane as the fact that her legs are starting to fall asleep forces her to get up.

"Help me up," she whispers to him. He nods and keeps his steady hold of her, slowly rising with her. She stays in his arms. Will and Joyce comes up to them.

"Nancy sweetheart my god are you okay I am so sorry I can't believe it, are you okay?" Joyce gets out all in one rush.

"I'm okay," she quietly answers.

"Thank you," Will says and steps forward, hugging her. She puts her arms around him and Joyce steps forward too. Soon she's enveloped in a gentle group hug.

"Everything okay in here? Scumbag passed out in the car, you really did a number on him," Hopper comes back into the room and informs them, looking at Jonathan. Joyce and Will step away from them, she stays in Jonathan's arms.

"Good," Jonathan says shortly.

"I'm okay," she says again.

"Do you need to go to the hospital?" Hopper looks at her.

"N-no," she shakes her head. "No hospital."

"Are you sure?" Jonathan gently asks, rubbing circles on her back.

"No hospital, please," she pleads. She just can't. Not right now.

"Okay," he nods.

"What happened?" Hopper asks.

"H-he wanted money," she lets him know. "I tried to get him to leave, to keep him out. He got mad, I tried to keep him out, long enough so Will could... I mean, so we could get away but..." she trails off.

"He forced entry?"

"Y-yes."

"And then he attacked you?"

"Uh... I... yeah... uh he... he pushed me and was on me but I kicked him and got loose but he was up again... Will hit him with the vase but then he tried to go after Will so I... wanted to get in between..." she rambles.

"That's okay, it's alright, you don't have to go through it all now," Hopper tells her. "I'm bringing him on breaking & entering and assault for now. I'll need to take official statements later, but that can wait. No hurry at all... I've got no problem letting him rot in the cell for as long as I'm allowed to..." he continues. "Mark my words. I'm nailing this son of a bitch to the wall once and for all," he finishes with authority.

They all nod.

"Take care. I'll be back later," Hopper parts with.

They're silent for a moment. Not much to say.

"Are you sure you're okay?" Joyce then asks.

"Yeah," she answers with a slight nod.

"Absolutely sure?" Joyce continues, coming closer and inspecting her split lip with a frown.

"Yes," she says again.

"You're badass, Nancy," Will tells her.

"You too," she softly answers.

"What... do you need? How do you feel? What... just tell me, I'll do anything?" Jonathan asks and she knows it to be true.

She thinks for a second. Or, tries to think rather. Lonnie is gone, danger is gone. Jonathan is here, safety is here, she can't think much more than that. She feels shaken, rattled. She feels sore. She feels a bit dirty.

"Shower," she tells him in a low voice.

"Okay," he nods.

He leads her to the bathroom. Inside he hesitates.

"Do you need any help?" He gently asks.

"No, I'm good," she lets him know after thinking about it. He nods.

"I'll be right on the other side of the door," he lets her know before exiting.

"Good," she nods.

And she's alone. It feels cold and lonely right away. But she just has to get through this, get through a shower. Hopefully she'll feel better then. She looks in the mirror. Sees her split lip, a mark across her cheek. She gets out of her clothes. Looks down her body, sees bruising and some marks. It's okay. It's okay. She's okay. She steps into the tub and turns on the shower. She's okay. That was bad but...

it could've gone really bad. She hisses slightly as she turns her body towards the spray. She feels sore. What could she have done differently? Why couldn't she fight him off? She's fought monsters for crying out loud. She should've grabbed something, anything, to use as a weapon. But fuck, she didn't find anything. No time. Maybe she should've kicked him more instead of just running that first time. At least Will is okay. But, fuck, she just wanted Will to get out of there but he stayed and she's not sure what had happened if he hadn't. And she's really not sure what would've happened if Jonathan hadn't gotten there when he did. Would Lonnie have stayed on her? Or worse, turned on Will?

She closes her eyes against the spray, washing her face. Breathe, Wheeler. She runs her hand over her bruised ribs. Her mind casts her back. He's over her and he's so much bigger and he knees her and she can't breathe, she can't breathe, she has to do *something* but she can't breathe, she's fumbling, desperate for anything and she really can't breathe and-

The shower curtain is pulled away and Jonathan is there. She almost jumps at the sudden movement but he keeps her steady with one arm while turning off the shower with the other.

"Sorry," he apologizes.

She's just getting her bearings again. In one move he wraps her in a towel and gently lifts her out of the tub. He sits down on the edge and sets her down in his lap, wrapping his arms around her and pulling her in close.

"Sorry, sorry just heard you... sounded like you were falling," he apologizes again.

He doesn't say anything else. She focuses on breathing.

"Thanks," she tells him when she's got it more under control. "I just... when I close my eyes I see..." she trails off as she remembers the last time she felt like this. That time it was a monster. Maybe humans are too.

"I'm gonna kill him," Jonathan murmurs.

"I think... I keep thinking... I should've done... something... more," she mumbles.

"What? You did everything. Nance you did everything. You fought him, you kept Will safe," he protests.

"I tried to... keep him out but the key... the lock, it wouldn't... I tried to hold it so Will could get out but... he's so strong?"

"He is. You did everything Nance, everything. I love you."

"I ran but he caught me... I went into the door frame I couldn't avoid... it hurt..."

She can feel him wincing.

"He was over me... he... ugh. I just kicked him. Hard as I could."

"Good."

"I ran... but he was up... but Will... Will was still there... I didn't want Will to be there I wanted him to be safe... but he saved me then, with the vase... Will is so strong..."

"He is... but so are you. You saved Will. You saved Will again. I love you."

"I didn't want him to get... at Will... I tried to grab something but he had me... I couldn't... I... Why couldn't I do... if you hadn't..."

"You did everything you could Nance," he says again. "You fought him and you saved Will. You did everything. I love you."

"I love you."

They sit in silence for a while, contemplating. She takes his left hand in both of hers. Studies the faded scar across the palm. Traces it with her thumb.

"I don't want to be alone," she tells him.

"You're not. You're not. I'm with you. I'm here."

"Please don't leave me," normally she'd hate to sound so vulnerable. But it's okay to be vulnerable. At least with him.

"Never. Never. I'm with you."

When she's ready, they venture out of the bathroom and into his room. He gets out some of his clothes for her to wear. She drops the towel to get dressed. She looks up when she hears a sharp intake of breath. Jonathan looks at her with tears in his eyes. She looks at herself. Right. The bruises. She quickly pulls on the sweatpants and t-shirt and walks over to him.

"Sorry, sorry," he apologizes again and wipes at his eyes.

"It's okay. I'm okay," she tells him again. It's sort of become her mantra. She's not sure she is but she wants to be. She hugs him close, he wraps his arms around her again.

"I'll never forgive myself for-" He starts.

"What?" She cuts him off. "Forgive yourself for what?"

"I should've..."

"Should've what, Jonathan? You weren't there! There was nothing you could've done! When you got here you did everything!"

"Maybe I..."

"You wanna talk about doing everything? *You* did everything you could. You always do. Jonathan. You saved me. You have to stop blaming yourself for things that aren't your fault. You're the best and I love you but you have to stop that because... because you're the best!" God she loves him but his self-deprecation and self-blame is infuriating. Anyone badmouthing Jonathan makes her mad, that includes Jonathan himself.

"Okay," he simply says.

"Not your fault," she mumbles into his chest.

"Okay... I just... I can't stand to see you hurt..."

"Then stop blaming yourself and putting yourself down because that hurts me. You're the best and I love you," she mumbly rambles into his chest.

"Okay... I just want to protect you... I can't stand it... you hurt..."

"You can't protect me from everything..." she continues. He's silent. She knows he hates that but it's the truth. "But you do all you can... what more is there Jonathan? Seriously. You do everything..."

He has to see it. He has to eventually realize that he can only do so much, he can't protect everyone he loves all the time. He can only do all he can, and that goes a long way.

"Okay..." She can hear from the tone in his voice that he's still not completely over it, that he can't protect her from everything. "Just tell me... anything, whatever you need... I'll do whatever... whatever you need," he continues.

"Just... stay with me... can we lay down?"

"Of course," he presses a kiss to her hair and leads her to the bed.

They lay down on his bed, cuddled together as close as they can possibly be.

"This is all I need," she whispers into his chest.

"Thank you for what you did," he says in his soft voice.

"I'd do it again," she tells him. "But better."

"You did awesome."

"You too."

"I..."

"Jonathan, are you psychic?" She asks him point blank.

"N-no?"

"Can you be in two places at once?"

"No."

"Then you have to admit, you did everything you could," she looks up at him. He meets her eye. "I don't know what other way to say it, that's just how it is. I know it's hard to accept, but you can't protect us all the time, 24/7. I want to protect you always too but it's just... we can't be together every minute of every day, awesome as that would be that's not how life works... and you can't foresee danger. You couldn't know that he'd come today... Please just stop beating yourself up like this. Please," she pleads with him.

He's quiet, taking it all in.

"Okay. I'm sorry. I... I will. I will try."

"Good. I love you."

"I love you."

They just stay there, cuddling in a comfortable silence. Eventually there's a knock on the door and Joyce comes into the room.

"Sorry, just checking in. How are you, sweetheart?" She softly asks while sitting down at the foot of the bed.

"I'm okay. How's Will?"

"He's good. He's just worried about you. Are you sure you're alright? Is there anything you need, anything at all?"

"No, I'm good."

"Are you hungry?"

"No, no thanks. I just... can I stay here? Tonight," she pleadingly asks. All she wants, all she needs is right here.

Joyce's gaze softens even more and she puts a hand on her knee.

"Sweetheart, far as I'm concerned you can stay here forever."

That makes her smile a bit.

"Thanks."

"I was actually going to talk to you two about that anyway, I mean before all this... I just think it's ridiculous, you two sneaking around in the night, I mean it's no big deal-" Joyce continues.

"You know?!" Jonathan interrupts, mortified, even more than she is.

"Oh honey please, you're not as sneaky as you think. Anyway it's no big deal I mean it's... sorry, sorry I don't know how we got into this now but yeah anyway, I trust you two to be responsible so you don't have to sneak around on my account."

"Thank... you?" Jonathan tentatively answers after a second.

"Yes, thank you," she fills in.

They're all silent for a moment. Weird conversation to be having.

"Mom, please let's never talk about this again," Jonathan then pipes up.

Something about the tone of his voice and just the absurdity of the situation makes her almost chuckle. Joyce does too.

"Fine."

Joyce looks contemplative for a moment and they're silent, waiting for her.

"Will told me about it all," she looks up, looks right at her. "Thank you. Thank you for keeping him safe."

"You're... I... I mean... no problem," she finally settles on as a reply. She doesn't know what to say.

"Thank you for everything, Nancy," Joyce continues with even more weight, looking deep into her eyes.

She nods.

"You're so strong, Nancy. It's amazing," Joyce continues.

"Yes," Jonathan mumbles.

"You... you are," she replies. She can't think of no woman stronger than Joyce.

"Thanks again," Joyce says and rubs her knee. "Get some rest," she continues and gets up off the bed again. "Good night."

"Night."

Later, they've moved under the covers. But she can't sleep. She can't get certain images out of her head, every time she closes her eyes.

"Jonathan?" She knows he's awake too, she's wrapped in his arms after all and she can always tell on his breathing if he's awake or not.

"Can't sleep?" He asks right away.

"Yeah. You?"

"I'll sleep when you sleep," he says matter-of-factly.

"Tell me a story," she requests. "Something nice."

"A nice story..." he contemplates, she can virtually hear him searching his mind.

"A happy story. Tell me about the best day of your life. When you were the happiest," she further requests. She needs those images instead.

"December 2, 1984," Jonathan starts.

She thinks about the date.

"The day after the Snow Ball."

"Yes. See, I never was much for school dances. But then this amazing,

strong, brave, smart, sweet, kind, beautiful, badass girl talked me into volunteering at one. And it turned out to be pretty fun. Portrait photos isn't that fun to take, and the music sucked, but this amazing girl was there and she made it all great. Like she does everything. She stood there and served punch and danced with the heartbroken boy who struck out with all the girls. And before it she went and helped with a dress and makeup for a girl who's never had any of it, just before her first dance ever. She's awesome and kind like that. And she looked amazing. She always does, but that night she really had boys weak in the knees. And after she'd served all the punch, after she'd danced with the heartbroken boy, she danced with me and I wasn't heartbroken, I was swooning. And after she snuck off with candy, punch and me. And we spent the night together and she was so close and warm and made my mind hazy and I thought that wow I really love this girl so much. But the next day was even better because in the morning I woke up and she was still in my arms because this girl is also really good at lying to her parents. And she snuck out of my window and went around to the front door for a charade that now has turned out to have been unnecessary, but we didn't know it then. And I got to make breakfast for her and my brother asked if it was a special occasion because I made waffles which is for special occasions and I tried to downplay it but it really was because I knew this was the day I had to let her know. And we spent the whole day together, listening to music, watching movies with my brother and mother. We told them we had 'nothing special' planned that day but to me it all was because everything is special with her. And then we went for a walk in the woods. Finally I gathered up the courage to tell her and she smiled this smile that lit up the whole forest and told me-

"I love you."

She finishes his story for him with a smile. He presses a kiss to her temple. She turns her face up. He presses his full lips to her split one.

"Keep talking", she encourages and closes her eyes.